

Leopoldina Naudet



Spiritual Diary

Volume III

1812-1831

[St. Gaspar Bertoni – Spiritual Director]

[ed. M. Bonato and P. Accordini]

Verona
Della Scala Editions
1999

English translation by
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[2001]

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INTRODUCTION 1812-1831

With these pages, there continues that part of the Spiritual Diary that would correspond to the time that Mother Naudet was under the direction of St. Gaspar Bertoni. At this time in her life, Mother Leopoldina was first living at St. Joseph's Monastery, in Verona, a guest of St. Madeline di Canossa, and working with her for about eight years. [After 1816, she would move with her community to St. Teresa's Convent, near to the Stimate].

It was at St. Joseph's that she had the opportunity and received the real gift of coming to know St. Gaspar - first as her Confessor and eventually, as her Spiritual Director.

At first Leopoldina resisted submitting her soul once more to another Director, but with the passing of time, she came to see in this the Will of God. It gradually became clear to her that she was to entrust herself to the care of Fr. Gaspar.

This was the stage of Leopoldina's real spiritual maturity. This time was marked by notable progress in the virtues and in her being endowed with numerous mystical gifts.

It became ever more evident that her mission as Foundress of a new religious institute under the name and the protection of the Holy Family was being clarified.

The divine inspirations she was receiving during these years moved her to form a group of women totally vowed to God, in both contemplation and action. She was being called to become, as it were, the corner-stone of the new Institute in her humility and love.

In this time of her life, her quest and then fulfillment of the will of God regarding herself and in all that pertained to the new Institute achieved a rather elevated level.

What continues here is the most sublime and the most important part of her Spiritual Diary.

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1812

January

I neglected to write exactly as much as I should.

This month passed for me with many continuous graces from the Lord, and there followed in me almost at every moment the sentiment of His intimate presence and assisting me in my every activity. It really seemed to me that He was doing everything in me and that I had nothing other to do than to further His operations and to follow them. All this was achieved with supreme ease and sweetness. The

experiencing so powerfully and clearly that the Lord achieved all, rendered me more detached from everything, and from myself, so much so that it seemed to me that I was totally reduced to nothing and annihilated.

I saw and knew in these encounters a purity of intention, the detachment from what I was doing, but seeing always and knowing that this proceeded from that continuous assistance. All of this impeded me, or, to put it with greater truth, made it impossible for me to make any reflection, or even to cast a glance on myself, only that of realizing with all clarity, that nothing could come from me.

I was striving through all of this to keep myself very close to the Lord so that I would not fall: this is what undoubtedly happened, if even for a moment I allowed myself not only to be abandoned to myself, but if He distanced Himself from me even for just a bit.

Some times in prayer it seemed to me that the Lord would grant me some light in my understanding, in order to penetrate in my cognition of Him. The effects of this knowledge was that then everything else seemed as nothing. This reached the level even to disdain all that was not Him, and increased this regarding myself all the more.

I had to make a real effort in order to occupy myself in other matters and, so to speak, it seemed to me that all that surrounded me was darkness and obscurity, in comparison to that light which only with some rays enabled me to understand. But these very rays then darkened all else and in order to make me comprehend the goods I was losing, whenever I would not follow in prayer that which the Lord wanted to achieve, by distracting me sometimes under various pretexts, allowing it then to pass on to other activities, without absolute necessity.

The defects that I committed also in this month, other than not corresponding to these graces, with abandoning myself totally to that loving leadership of the Lord concerning me, that of neglecting mortification, both internal as well as external, my not doing anything for His divine service, notwithstanding so many stimuli and helps.

At times, the Lord presented before my eyes all that he was doing and internally stimulated me with this to work through Him. I was being pressed, so to speak, not to lose time in doing something for the One Who does so much for me. However, I remain with these desires without giving them any effect, repeating: **Lord, what would You have me do?** [Ac 9:5] - **Teach me to do Your will, as You are my God** [Ps 143:10].

But, I never begin.

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February

I experienced in this month aridity in prayer, but some effects of that sentiment that has been so vivid remained which I experienced all through last month. The recollection of this helped me and it seemed to me that the Lord, was not making me navigate tirelessly with sails, but He provided me with oars, giving me also the desires and the good pleasure to be able to work for Him in a time in which I was not having that usual consolation.

I desired much to serve God at my own expense, but I saw with all this that it was always at His that I responded, knowing clearly that these very desires and this will to respond came from Him, since I am incapable of having them. In working, I was helped much with trust in God, supporting myself on Him so much more strongly

that being deprived of any sensible sentiment, I saw all the more, more with what happened than with simple knowledge, that which I really am, and feeling my lower nature rising up and agitating, with sentiments of pride, of reproof for the activities of others, and also at times, even envy for their good.

All these effects made me realize my need at every moment of God, and to keep myself as closely as I could to Him, begging Him to purify and reduce to nothing these motions within me, and to render me just that which He would want of me, being totally bereft of all these obstacles, considering only that cleanliness of conscience and to please Him. I resigned myself to being deprived of consolation, even all my life, only if I could be able to have this grace of loving Him, serving Him and not offending Him.

Regarding the Institute, He gave me great sentiments in Him, particularly one morning in approaching Holy Communion. It seemed to me that He was saying to me that such out to be my trust in Him regarding the Institute, that even on those occasions when it seemed to me to be unable to overcome the obstacles, that I ought to hope that He might even work miracles and that my faith should never wane.

Another time, also on going to Holy Communion, I felt the duty for this same reality, of trusting in His omnipotence, His infinite goodness and mercy and His providence.

These sentiments of confidence and trust in the Lord followed me in all that I had to do and, in the measure that these increase in me, there increases also a genuine sentiment of knowledge of myself, of my misery and incapacity and it seems to me that one thing helps another.

I desired also to do much for the Lord, but these are always ineffectual desires.

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March

3. In prayer today, I felt myself immersed in God with the desire of His Holy Spirit, and so imbued with Him, that my every action, every thought, every word, were directed by Him.

And it seemed to me that I was like a sponge all full of this Spirit and I asked the Lord that He might give me help, so that after prayer there might be retained in me the effect of all that He was then granting me to feel.

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6. In prayer, here continued a great sentiment of God, and total trust in Him, of abandonment.

And these followed me in every circumstance and activity, so that I do not lose sight ever of God and the strength and grace that He communicates, trusting **solely in Him**. This was accompanied by continuous stimuli of pleasing Him in everything, of consulting and seeking His will in everything.

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12. In prayer after lunch, these sentiments expressed above became all the stronger and more vivid, and there was united to them a great desire of total annihilation of myself, so that God might be all and alone working in me in everything. I had at the same time an intellectual insight of this entire death to myself and of this life that is totally spiritual and of God. And He gave me further to understand that He willed that I should live in this manner.

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13. Following this desire of total death of my nature, as also of abandonment in God, it seemed that I felt supported and established in Him, in every encounter and that from this there came a supreme facility to do all I had to and to conduct myself in every occasion in accord with that which he wanted of me.

I experienced true sentiments of my own nothingness, accompanied by the supreme consolation that God was all, and I seemed to me that I was very rich in all this and from it I saw that I should and could prevail in every thing.

I found consolation and rejoicing, therefore, in the need that I have of God, of not being anything to be able to have and to share in God, of Him Who is all. And it seemed to me that if all this had been my choice, in place of being a nothing, that of being something, I would not have wanted it, rejoicing in my poverty of every good for God to be everything and my only everything.

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14. It seemed to me in prayer that the Lord let me know and how to grasp how easily I would fall into self-love, if He [with Him occupying my whole self, with having me touch my own nothingness and to experience so vividly that He is the One Who is guiding me by the hand in everything] did not provide me with the remedy, and withdrew in an instant from me with His sensible presence. And this brought me more gratitude toward Him, and penetration of my own nothingness, but always with joy and consolation, to find everything already in God.

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15. In prayer, the Lord gave me some recognition of the goods of which He has enriched our souls and of which He has made them capable.

These are the goods of grace in this world and a share in Himself, making it possible at times to understand in some manner, His filling the soul with joy and contentment, as the beginning of that glory to which He wishes to admit my soul in eternity.

The Lord brought me to enter quite in depth this knowledge, which was so subtle and spiritual that only with difficulty am I able to express it.

The effects that all this produced in my soul were joy, gratitude, desire to love such goodness very much, which brought me to understand all this in so intimate a manner. There were also sorrow and confusion for having so many times stained with so many faults the beauty of this soul received by God and having so abused His infinite goodness and mercy.

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20. Today, Holy Thursday, thinking during the Mass, at which I was to receive Holy Communion, about the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament, I was drawn in spirit to the Cenacle in contemplation, and as long as I was there, I experienced supreme sweetness, but also strongly drawn out of myself.

However, in the act in which I internally abandoned myself and I gave in to the power and sweetness of this attraction, feeling that this was being communicated also in my body and that I began no longer to experience myself. I was distracted by a fear caused by nature. I did this, though, through a scruple, knowing that it had been said to me not to heed it but to trust in God. However, I did find an excuse that I was experiencing this from a physical weakness. I went ahead, distracting myself much by conserving the sentiments and being present to myself.

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29. Easter Sunday

Before Holy Communion, I asked pardon of the Lord for not being abandoned wholly in that day in Him and not to have furthered, or, rather having been distanced from that which He wanted to work out in me.

I promised the Lord not to do this any more. And He brought me to understand that I should not doubt when I felt those effects that come from Him, since only He alone can achieve them, and these cannot be done with any human force. I reminded myself in fact that when He is not the one who draws me to Him, then in vain do I recollect myself and no matter how much I seek fervor, I do not experience it, whenever He does not grant it to me.

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Month of April

I spent the first days of this month without anything particular regarding my interior life to note, and I made use in all my activities of past sentiments that the Lord granted me, and sustaining myself all along with trust in Him. The sentiment which due to His infinite mercy, He maintains constant in me and in which He makes me see in what all my security stands.

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10. Seeing myself on this day about to undertake and having to commit myself to many tasks, there passed through me the thought that these would leave me less time to tend to prayer and internal recollection, so the Lord granted me the grace of placing me in a great quiet. And He led me to understand that this would help me to tend to these tasks without encountering the impediments that I feared.

I tried to establish myself in this, to confide much in His help in everything and to count only on Him and not on my limited capacity.

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11.12.13.14.15.16. All these days I experienced much quiet. In which the Lord placed me in order to take care of everything and to handle all my business. It helped me also that there was prevailing in me only that trust in Him, to remove from me all self-love regarding the outcome of my undertakings, knowing that they did not have any of my self-love, because there prevailed in me that help of God in order to accomplish them.

And so, no matter how great my self-love might be, it was not possible, knowing this truth quite clearly, that I could hide myself there from whence all good came.

And this helped me very much, and I proposed to seek **him alone** in everything, and nothing of myself.

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17. On this day, the Lord granted me in prayer a particular fervor regarding the Institute. I desired very much that it be established, to strive to handle everything with a genuine desire to procure the glory of God through it.

The Lord gave me the thought to communicate this particular matter, which He entrusted to me, to my ecclesiastical superior, that would provide me with further lights for the necessity of the endeavor. This I later carried out.

From this light, I drew ever great trust in God, that He would give me in the proper time all the means and lights necessary for the enterprise, without my having

to provide for the time. And I received much consolation in my spirit from this thought and of these proofs that I have of God's assistance and of His infinite goodness.

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16. On awaking this morning, while still half asleep, I heard these words said to me by a third person: *There were will a chain of persecutions, and the approval will not come under this Pope.*¹

These words made no impression on me, and I did not pay all that much attention to them.

I turned toward the Lord and worked in all my duties with His help.

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18-24.

In one of these days I had a great proof of my own misery, from the news that came to me from Vienna. I did conceive fears and had much anguish, while I seemed to me that the graces the Lord granted me, were to give me such strength and constancy, that it all rendered me strong in every moment.

However, the realization of just what I am, led me to grasp even more that the Lord is the One Who acts in me, when I do not place disproportionate sentiments, and this renders even more sensible that separation that I feel from that which is His, and from that which I bring to the table.

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May

I was not able to write precisely in this month.

I only remember some graces that the Lord offered me and that I note to remind me of them in the encounters in which I found myself.

The Lord placed my spirit in a great quiet concerning those fears that I had conceived, that a power obliged to do all that they required from Vienna.

This gave me a great trust in Him, that everything would turn out all right, even if it should happen that which according to my nature would be contrary, and that I have to hope in miracles, as He has already granted to me, for the carrying out of His most holy will, which can be impeded by nothing. I felt then, that He really had dominion over my entire self, and that I have nothing that would be repugnant in me to His divine will. I found myself much quieted in these reflections, as though there did not even exist those difficulties which humanly I do see, and that can bring me such suffering.

I knew that the Lord has given me that charity of not desiring the advancement and the establishment of this Work which he has entrusted to me, and when I am at peace over this matter, other matters seems almost as nothing for me.

In prayer for the most part, I experienced heaviness and annoyance. But, I felt myself fortified in faith. And in my activity, I continued the sentiment of trust in God and the actual desire to give Him pleasure in all that I was doing.

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June

3. In prayer on this day the Lord drew me particularly to Him and made me yearn for that perfection which my heart strives in its operations and not limiting them. I

¹ The approval of the Institute would come more than 21 years later, to be granted by Pope Gregory XVI, on December 20, 1833.

desired that the charity, and the fire that it produces, might consume everything that was not in accord with God.

I experienced a great confidence that these operations of His grace and to allow myself to be worked on and managed by Him, this would be to render me suitable for whatever He wants of me. And in these sentiments of trust, I said to Him: *I am not good for anything, but you and I, we will do great things.*

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4. At Holy Communion on this day, that fervor continued in me which the Lord had excited in me the day before in prayer and it seemed to me to see clearly, but intellectually. This let me know that in every endeavor, He will do the most, and that I would have only one hand to offer, without feeling the weight, that He would be able to all Himself.

I desired to transform myself totally into Him, to be ever more similar to Him, seeing that my every effort and every capacity in working, can only come from this.

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18. In prayer of this day, I was ever more intent on these sentiments of love toward God. I felt strong desires of loving Him ever more, so much so that it seemed to me that union with Him would no longer satisfy me, but my heart was seeking something even more, and it seemed to me that this would be transformation.

I felt myself no more united, but as engulfed in God and I could not do anything other than love and rejoice in Him.

The effects that were produced on my physical nature were a more rapid palpitation, a warmth, that lasted even after prayer, on merely remembering these effects, they were renewed in me.

And these sentiments and effects lasted also on the day after.

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23. On this day, it seemed to me that I would not be content of all that I feel, but that I desire a more solid love.

The many defects that I commit confronted me and it seemed that they do not distance me from God, but they do bother me a little. I saw that purity that I should have, and finding that I am still far from this², and I experienced some regret, without however being disquieted nor disturbed, but only sorrow in not being as I see I ought to be. After receiving ever new graces and an increase of charity, not to correspond to these many goods that the Lord shares with me: this led me to make the resolution of keep careful vigil over myself, in order not to be displeasing to the Lord even in the slightest manner.

The changes that I experience in prayer at the increase of charity, which from time to time that I feel the effects of this, increased. But, it is always toward this virtue that I am moved with greater or less ardor.

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July

2. In the prayer of this day, I still felt my heart being enkindled with charity, but rather to rejoicing in feeling this, it seemed to me that this only increased the desire to be ever more enkindled.

² There is a mis-print here: the last two lines on p. 174 are repeated as the first two lines on p. 175 of the Italian edition of Mother Leopoldina's *Diary*.

And whenever I experienced a very powerful movement that seemed to block my breathing. Yet I was not satiated with it, and seemed to me that I had not as yet even begun to love the Lord.

The Lord increased these desires of my heart, that continuously yearns to love and to burn with this love.

I then passed the whole month in these sentiments, and in prayer they occupied me and penetrated me wholly.

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August

In this month, I experienced greater yearnings to love God. In prayer, I seemed to me that the acts, the most intense, produced the fruit I would desire, that, namely, to do much for the Lord. I felt that I am not content with what I experience. But I desire to give Him proofs of my love.

In the beginning of this month, the concern that I had for a companion of mine who was dying, brought me to pray ardently to the Lord for her, desiring that He would preserve her.

It seemed to me one day that as I prayed for her, that the Lord placed before my eyes that which would happen if she got better, and that it would be better that the Lord might take her to Himself at that moment that would be the most favorable for her soul.

This quieted me and made me resigned so much so that I feared even asking anything else for her.

Because of the trust that I have in the Lord, in His great mercy and goodness, this brought me to see that His loving heart would not fail to hear the prayers that are offered, and that since we really do not know what to ask for, we often err in this. And it seemed to me that with the knowledge that this brought me, this inclined my spirit not to ask any more for a favor that was not what is the best, and which He would as a result, not grant it to me.

The multitude of my undertakings made me suffer.

I felt the weight of them, and it seemed to me that they were bringing me distractions in prayer, and were keeping me from that continuous occupation of my mind in God.

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September

2.3. In these days, while rejoicing much in the Lord in prayer, there came to me the fear of being too attached to these enjoyments that I that I experience when I am more free from so many undertakings, when I offer prayer with fewer distractions. I manifested this to the one to whom I should, and I tried to know better, before the Lord, what could bring this defect about, since it was not in what I said it was.

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5³. In recommending myself to the Lord, in order to know what was said to me, it seemed to me that the greater defect came, that in the different undertakings that I have, when they are many in number, I did not proceed with that tranquility necessary many times, and this is what could have brought me that heaviness that I felt.

³ In the Italian edition, the last two lines on p. 176, are repeated on the top of p. 177.

I proposed, therefore, to make the particular examen on this, giving supreme attention to conserve internally a supreme peace and tranquility, no matter how grave and varying the matters may be that present themselves to be accomplished, so that, by keeping my spirit free, these enterprises may not bring distraction and burden in prayer.

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15. After having been exercised in this examen for some days it seems to me to have helped very much, because, my preserving more quiet in the affairs that I have to handle, in this quiet I find the Lord also in these same undertakings. And this makes me rejoice continuously in Him, since when for a moment I am distracted by them, it seems to me that I am outside of my center and this is the cause of the heaviness that these enterprises bring me.

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October

3. On this day, setting down to prayer I felt called internally to a great internal solitude, which the Lord made me understand that I had to cultivate also in the midst of my occupations.

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4. In prayer today, I experienced the same stimuli to cultivate this internal solitude.

I was seeking within myself to grasp the extension of this, and it seemed to me that it meant the same as internal recollection.

I felt that it was something different and that under this term, the Lord had allowed me to experience that it contained more. And that I should treat as special this light that the Lord had granted me to teach me about this internal solitude, that He had made me understand that He wanted it of me. And it seems to me that I asked it of Him with much trust in His infinite goodness.

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5. This same experience continued for me in all the spiritual exercises of this day.

In my work and in every encounter I was called back to this internal solitude.

I experience many benefits from it, since each and every useless thought seems to me to dilute this recollection, and then it is immediately cut off.

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6. I experienced in this day, during which I had many external occupations, a perfect peace and quiet in all of them, which seemed to me to come from this continuous recall to internal solitude with my God, without anything being able to penetrate within me, which would not be Him. And every moment I am being called within.

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9.10. In these days there came to me the idea that I might begin to understand the advantage of this internal solitude with some illustrations and lights that the Lord granted me.

I understood, then, that this will assist me to be more intimately united with the Lord.

I experienced a greater familiarity with Him, which seemed to me to come from this internal solitude and to be for me as a pledge of that greater union that I will enjoy in advancing in this exercise.

It seemed to me also that I understand that this would be a means to bring about that which the Lord many times said to me with these words: *think only of Me, and I will think of you and for you.*

In fact, this internal solitude makes me exclude every thought and renders me abandoned with a greater confidence in God, which makes supremely happy and contented.

The Lord not only makes me understand, but also made me almost⁴, I would say, see uncovered how this would occur and how uselessly do I worry about certain matters. There is nothing other I have to do than to love Him and to follow that which He wants of me, and to leave all the rest to Him.

In experiencing the effects of that light which He has granted me, all tend to work out in me that which God wills. I experienced a great fear of losing this grace that He bestowed on me. And it seemed to me that this was a reality that is so subtle and spiritual, and the least thing could make me lose it.

I remained, therefore, in great confusion within myself, and yet it seemed that I possessed a joy, which was placed in a very fragile vase and that every slight damage could make me lose it.

This sentiment provided me with a greater vigilance over myself and a fear [however, a loving fear] of incurring in some defect that could deprive me, or of obscuring that new light with which the Lord had communicated to my soul.

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11.12. In these days, I experienced the same sentiments, stimuli and effects and I kept them with internal solitude which I enjoyed very much.

There came to me some fear of attachment to these enjoyments, and that that vigilance which I employed over myself, might be even more for that purpose, for the Lord Himself. It seemed to me though that this was not the case.

I undertook the particular examen on useless thoughts, which in some manner disturbed this internal solitude. I felt that in recalling this, it was easy for me to neglect them, and it is necessary for me to do this. It seemed to me that these brought about the effect that it was customarily produced the moving solitude to the exterior.

So, I tried to remove them and not allow any intellectual rationalization to unfold.

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13. In the prayer of this day, and in my internal occupation with the Lord, it seemed to me that I should stay quiet in that fear conceived the day before, concerning the affection and attachment concerning them, and not just enjoy them in so far as they come from God and lead me to God and they may make me pleasing to Him.

In brief, it seems to me that I do love Him, and not just His gifts, in which I find **Him alone, He** is my **sole** enjoyment.

⁴ The last two lines on p. 178 are repeated as the first two lines of p. 179, in the Italian edition of the *Diary*.

The sentiments of confusion remained for me, those of humiliation, and in these I rejoiced further, thinking they are pleasing to God and that He granted them to me in order to communicate the more with me.

In these affections and sentiments, I passed the day

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14. At Holy Communion, which I received on this day, I experienced less distraction than usual and the silence of all my faculties.

Recommending myself afterwards to St. Joseph and praying to him, since he has always been a protector to me for my interior life, that he may be also for this interior solitude, which the Lord asks of me.

I thought that he would be the guardian of this and I asked him to exercise that office for me, since I am not suited to do it.

In that moment, the Lord granted me to experience also my own wretchedness and how justly I should fear it.

I have very vividly present to me in these days how many graces that the Lord has communicated to my soul, which for the greater part after having received them, they are diluted, and not considering this to the extent that I should, by not keeping vigil over myself in order not to lose them and by not making that use of them for which the Lord granted them to me.

In all the activities of this day there continued in me a great sentiment of this internal solitude and with ease I rejected those failings of thought that could impede me from this.

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17. In Holy Communion of this day, being occupied with this same sentiment, I rejected every thought that could disturb that entire solitude, that the Lord wills that there be conserved with **Him alone** in my interior.

There was presented to me in that moment that just as our soul⁵ is His temple, I ought to imitate that zeal with which the Lord once cast from the temple those who were selling their wares, etc.⁶ I have to cast out constantly that which the external and useless would want to introduce into me.

In these sentiments and in that casting out that I made of every thought, I rejoiced supremely, experiencing peace and contentment, understanding also that ease which the Lord granted me, and it seemed to me that the Lord was pleased with this.

Another view comes to me and it was that of seeing the present state in which the Lord had placed my soul, with that which I was in just a little while ago.

It seemed to me then that once, when the Lord made me experience His presence with some greater abundance, I remained as though taken up with this insight and occupied with it, and this took from me for some time also the use of my faculties, and I found that the Lord possessed all of me.

Now it seems to me that it is no longer I, but that it is He with only the remnants of me, which I ought to cast out.

⁵ Once again, the last two lines on p. 180 are repeated as the top two lines in p. 181 in the Italian edition of the *Diary*.

⁶ cf. Jn 2:15.

And He moved me to do this so that there might remain **Him alone** without anything of me.

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19. In prayer, I experienced the same effects, feeling zeal and concern to reject every slight and useless thought that presented itself to my mind. And this without any confusion, and it seemed to me, indeed, that there was established in my mind such clarity by means of which I worked with supreme freedom also in this.

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20. The view of the benefits of God in my regard occupied me very much, with the recollection [quiet, though] of how badly I always conducted myself with these. All these various experiences enkindled within me love for God and a concern to correspond with greater ardor regarding Him. It seems to me, that whenever I experience this duty that I have, that asks that I use a supreme caution that He be in total possession of me, and that I am not there, other than with a few remnants that I ought to cast away.

He led me to know also how much He wished to operate in me, and it seemed to me that He was saying that He wanted to enrich my soul with many goods.

Then He placed before my eyes on just how much I had need of these for the fulfillment of His designs regarding me, and how sublime these were, which could never be executed, if there were to remain in me the least aspect of myself, and that therefore He accomplished this work in me.

The Lord also said to me further a great fear regarding the greatness of these graces that He offers me. And it seemed to me that there would only be needed a subtle thread, like a hair. Should I break this, I would fall over.

This insight, it seems to me, places in me a humble reverence before God and in a great attention to all the teachings which He was giving me.

I continued however to enjoy in my interior of all this, experiencing the impact of the Lord in all this, but this work seems to be subtle and spiritual, which would be fitting that I should live only of the spirit.

When in the prayers of these days, out of a certain habit, I used internally with the Lord the usual expressions [that I will that the **Lord is alone** in me, and that I wish to be all his, and so on], I feel that already this is the reality, that I no longer have to tend to this, with willing that He should be within me, I have to will in the indwelling that is His, that there should not enter any more anything of me.

In brief, it seems to me to be repugnant to the present state, in which I have placed myself, the considering that nothing pertains to me, both of the spirit, and in brief, of the entire interior.

In my activities, I feel trust, thinking that God is the One who accomplishes all. This gives me both boldness and trust, and at the same time, it moves me to beg Him that nothing of me should come into this enterprise, not can it ever enter there. In the very act of my being moved toward Him with the petition that nothing of me should enter this, it seemed to me that at the moment there is not anything of me there, but it could always enter. My defects bring about some fears, as it seemed to me impossible to keep in harmony such graces and so much mixture of failures. In the act whereby I commit them, it seemed to me that I doubt what I experience, and within prayer and outside it. But this doubt vanishes in the act that the Lord

communicates graces to me, because at times it makes me feel other that this could be Him. And I felt myself at peace over this.

†

October 26th, while offering my prayer, there came to my mind that person who is so ill and to whom I owe so much as all of us do to have me moved me so much toward my own perfection and for the advantage of the Institute.⁷

I saw, as if it were being read, that which he would dispose of his own affairs and his companions, with his illness becoming more serious. And he would give me various directions, as also I have to respond only: that I know that he ought to command me in all, and that I, trusting in the Lord, to obey him.

An hour later it followed as I have seen, and felt that I had to respond just as it is, and nothing more.

As the trust that I have in the Lord, as well as those words that I heard a while ago, was a little less on that day, that but for a slight matter I would have been under that person. Some fears surprised me, as well as the affliction made me break out with the Lord in this expression: *Lord, if those words that You said to me are verified, then will I have to fear the deceit in all the other things, what have you made me know?*

I felt in the center of my soul the greatest trust and hope, but was oppressed in its periphery, and little relief did I draw for it. However, I made some reflections on God's conduct in my regard, and the affliction that I experienced. This seemed to me to be a proof that I would not die as I experienced these encounters. It seemed to me further that the Lord left me in this affliction in order to prove my confidence in Him, and that I would have reason to repent for allowing myself to slide a bit into sadness.

These reflections moved me to offer internally acts of confidence in God, with which I protested that I did not want to show any diffidence in His regard, but rather to hope in His goodness. I lasted in this mood back and forth the whole day, making every effort though not to show to the outside that which was really feeling.

I spent the night then in some sadness, not being able to sleep because of the suffering I felt and not matter how much I recommended myself to the Lord, it did not pass.

In the morning, finally I went to Holy Communion, and I prayed to the Lord to console me, saying:

O Lord, can You leave in this state, this, Your servant, who so loves You, who poorly suffers having an affliction for which she fears that she does not rust You, as she should?

In fact, after Mass, the Lord consoled me with better news. Then, I promised not to fear any more, no mater how poorly I might be.

†

The day after, the **29th**, reflecting on what had happened on the 26th, I thought how necessary it would have been for me, due to what that person had said to me, that if I had had the vow of obedience, because it would have been able to arouse fears in me and would not bring me that assurance that would be necessary for me in a matter of such great importance.

⁷ Mother Leopoldina is referring to Fr. Gaspar Bertoni.

However, the Lord led me to understand these words:

See that I remedied this with having you first know the matter, so that from Me you would have had assurance.

And the Lord confirmed me also in that which some time ago He brought me to know, the duty I have to obey that person for his command. For this, I need to give space to obedience that I would have wanted to promise to him.

†

November⁸

During the first days of this month, I was moved by the Lord to a greater confidence and hope in Him.

And for this, he made use of a failing that I had committed in this regard, so great is His infinite goodness and mercy toward me.

This manner of picking me up from this, brought me to feel and to know so much. And I proposed not to ever do this wrong to the Lord of being diffident in regard to His words.

†

15. In prayer, there was presented to me that I ought to be at that perfection where I should arrive in order to correspond to what the Lord had designed for me.

And it seemed to me that I ought with the spirit to stand always on high and posed and re-posed always in Him, remaining in this world only with the body, spiritualizing with this my actions.

†

18. It seemed to me, in prayer on this day, to find myself upon on a cliff, from which with only a little, I could fall down low.

This gave me sentiments of confusion regarding myself and fear, accompanied though by trust in God.

Reflecting at another moment on the graces that the Lord through His infinite mercy bestowed on me, and on the other hand, thinking of my very great miseries, it seemed to me again impossible that it would be true what I experience in prayer.

However, I consoled myself once more thinking that it really is true what the Lord did for me.

And that precisely my wretchedness was that which He had in view to heal with so many stimuli, in order that I would finally resolve to forget about my misery and to correspond to so many other benefits.

19. In prayer, there was presented to me once more the perfection to which the Lord willed that I should reach, and reminding me of which He had made me understand just a few days earlier, I thought that, since I am always so supported by Him, I should busy⁹ myself with this fact by recalling it to mind.

But the Lord led me to understand in what manner that this ought to be and that in place of my occupations, that I should arise in spirit to Him, and from Him [in Whom I ought always to remain fixed and established] I ought to descend to those duties, and to give myself to them, by remaining, though, always in Him.

†

⁸ The month of Novemer is repeated: at the bottom of p. 184 and the top of 185.

⁹ The last line on p. 185 of the Italian edition has been left incomplete.

21. The insight that the Lord gave me in these past days, of that which he wanted of me, continued in me also today.

And feeling that He wanted to spiritualize me in all, He brought me to understand how much is lacking in where I presently am.

My misery renders me ever more open. I was, it sees to me, penetrated with this, with the desire of humiliation.

It seemed to me to see within myself that two abysses are joined together: one of mercy on the part of God, and the other of misery on my part.

In prayer, I remained passive, and I prayed to the Lord to go on purifying my spirit with the fire of His charity, finding myself in these matters in a vice, in which I ought to work out this purification.

†

25. On this day, the Lord sent me a tribulation, which struck me powerfully. He gave me at the same time a ray of light through which I remembered the promise that I had made, in a past tribulation, of no longer mis-trusting His promises.

But I did not follow up on this ray, and I found myself abandoned to myself, and consequently I experienced all my misery, which brought to me that sadness, affliction, restlessness and bitterness. In place of reminding myself of all that the Lord brought me to know a few days ago, I considered nothing other than the unpleasantness within myself, and presenting to my imagination every small part of it, it justly served always as a new torment for me.

†

26. My misery continued also on this day.¹⁰ There was added here on this the view of my sins, those of my continuous ingratitude, as the causes of what was going on, and thus all contributed to my bitterness and affliction.

I felt the weight of having to busy myself and to tend to external matters, while I bore such a heavy weight in my soul.

Above all this, the goodness of my God gave me, however, the inspiration to seek and to rejoice in suffering with doing violence to myself out of love for Him.

And remembering that, therefore, as He was going to die, and sharing in the sufferings of those women who met Him, their travail occupied my thoughts¹¹, setting aside His, I tried to unite myself to Him in this exercise.

†

27,28,29. The continuation of the thought of my wretchedness went on, darkness of spirit, bitterness in my mind.

I prayed to the Lord, in the midst of all this, that He might show His broad goodness and take away all this darkness. I said to Him also that I was not asking that this chalice should pass from me¹², if He wanted me to drink from it, but only that He might grant me that resignation, the lack of which brought me greater suffering than everything else.

I asked that He might make me experience internally that which He so willed that matters would unfold, because then, as I experienced other times, His words

¹⁰ The last two lines on p. 186 are repeated at the top of p. 187 in the Italian edition of the *Diary*.

¹¹ cf. Lk 23:27.

¹² cf. Lk 22:42.

being deeds, I would have no longer any difficulty of submitting to it all, and with this there would return that peace and tranquility in my spirit.

Remaining in the midst of all this anguish, the recollection of God's infinite goodness toward my soul, seemed to me that He would indeed do what I was asking Him for, if it were necessary, but that I forced myself to have resignation for that which the Lord did not ask.

I tended toward **God**¹³ **who alone** ought to occupy my mind. And I repented powerfully and it seemed to me with this that I had wandered outside that path of charity and trust in God which He willed that I should follow.

I made new proposals in which it seemed to me that I desired proofs also to see that I maintain them.

†

December

3. At Holy Communion of this day, I sought to abandon myself entirely in the Lord and to will not to think any more of anything other than trusting in Him in all matters, knowing the wrong that I had given to Him in these past days.

I felt, though, in the depths of my being, that there was still that bitterness but I tried to offer it to the Lord, asking Him that it might serve in some way to discount all in which I failed in these past days.

†

5. In the morning, offering my prayer, the Lord brought me to know the love that He had for my soul, which ought always to remain quiet and secure for me, since His love is active, and committed.

I internalized all this and rejoiced, being confounded, humbled and thanking Him. At a given point, I was interrupted, and could not get back to it.

†

10. This morning I was for a moment lost in thought, thinking that a person to whom the Lord gave concern and commitment for the Work, and who had directed me in it, and who was of such great help to me, now would no longer be able to do this, since he has become busy in other matters.

However, the Lord gave me the grace to overcome this displeasure, and gave me this thought, with reflecting that He had to this person such concern and commitment: that since this has all come from Him, I should remain quiet.

I thought further that this person, now being occupied in matters of importance for the glory of God, forgetting myself for him, I ought to rejoice in it, forgetting myself and think only of this¹⁴.

I tried to enter into these sentiments, that they might overcome my wretchedness which I still felt.

†

11. The Lord gave me a great desire to look only to His glory and to strive to procure this with all my strength.

These sentiments that I had in Holy Communion, continued in my prayer and I desired to be totally forgetful of myself, to look solely to that which was for His glory.

†

¹³ The top line on p. 188 is incomplete in the Italian edition of the *Diary*.

¹⁴ The last three lines on p. 188 are the first three lines on p. 189 of the Italian edition of the *Diary*.

14. In prayer, I experienced a great desire to bring myself into harmony in all matters to the divine will.

I exposed to the Lord how my life would be sheer weight without this uniformity, that I prayed He would give me. I feel that it is not enough to have it **solely in His will**, but I am not content, when everything in myself is not in harmony with this most holy will and I cannot find consolation in this world, other than in this total uniformity. And it is so that my greatest suffering is to feel some slight repugnance toward this.

I begged the Lord to purify all the remnant of my wretchedness, which is found in me and to give me a supreme readiness in all encounters that might be contrary to what He wills, with all my heart, with all affection and with all of myself.

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1813

January

The Lord drew me ever more to remain fixed in Him and to have **no other** outlook than **Him** in everything. In prayer, I found myself always passive, feeling however, that the Lord was at work in me and He wanted to do it all. There would be nothing I could do, and yet I did not feel that I was wasting time, the more that I did not do. This all made me abandon myself ever more in Him, and to remain immobile in His hands.

Presenting myself once to the Lord in prayer, with the desire of knowing His most holy will, regarding a step that has to be made regarding a specific matter, He drew me to Himself, and it seemed that He said to me:

That I ought to live by the spirit and to spiritualize everything. This is so that everything which falls under the senses, I should make no account at all, and rising above everything, to remain so much in Him, having trusted in His infinite mercy and goodness, that from this I ought not to remove myself from anything whatever that might happen here on earth.

It seemed to me that this comforted me to suffer everything and this gave to me, by means of this confidence in God, a great indifference for all that might happen.

This confidence I experienced, in a particular manner, regarding the work that the Lord has placed in my hands, for which it seemed to me that I ought to remain secure, that I should not be afraid of anything, rendering me fixed in God, I would overcome everything.

This recognition brought it about that having some encounter that seemed to be opposed to those lights that I had concerning this, looking at them solely for an instant, was for me a reason for correction. And from the merciful hand of God I felt myself being lifted up out of the other views and being drawn to that sight in Him, which is what He wills for me to have.

I found myself other times drawn to the Lord, with His making me understand that sympathy that is found between Him and our soul. I felt this in certain moments very strongly, with an ever greater detachment from this earth, and with the desire to unite myself ever more to the Lord, to Whom my soul aspires with great attraction, by His making me yearn for an evermore intimate union.

I experienced many times a certain regret for not being able to spend more time in prayer and, at the same time, finding myself so well off with the Lord, and it seemed to me that my soul in all these took on more strength, and it learned the manner of pleasing Him more, and fulfilling that which He wants of me. I experienced some regret that that time passed and that on this I could have, and would have liked to pause some hours so that I would not be in such haste, since in the measure that they passed, they took from me the good that I possessed.

The Lord also made me know how much it was pleasing to Him that I should be concerned about my companions, since those few times that I did this, it seemed that fervor was increased in me and this brought to me a greater knowledge of the perfection with which He wills to be served in this Institute. This knowledge makes me desire ever more the moment in which it might be established here in order to give Him greater glory. This leads me to see also that this should be my commitment, and how much I should truly live of the spirit in order to fulfill His plans for this Work.

He also continued inspiring my trust, as being assured within of the mercies that He wishes to share with this Institute and how many things He will bring about, for which I always have new arguments to admire and praise His Infinite goodness.

For this assurance that He places in my spirit, I feel that my heart slides towards the Lord and it seems to me that I do not want to wait until all of this happens and that I will have seen them, in order to thank Him.

†

The Spiritual Exercises

March

6. Since I was to begin my Retreat tonight, it seemed that the Lord was disposing me for this by giving me a particular recollection in all my external occupations and multiplied those that were my responsibility. He placed my spirit in a great quiet and peace and it seemed to me in this to enjoy that spirit of a continual communication with God.

In preparing myself for Confession, I heard internally the voice of the Lord Who said to me:

This time, that you are deprived of help, I will be the One Who will help you, and you will experience great benefits from this.

These words brought to me a strong trust and hope and it seemed to me that my heart opened up, rejoicing still in deprivation of all external help.

I admired the divine goodness that this comfort brought me, without my even having thought on that day in any way, of this privation and there came to me so much that which my own weakness could, however, thereafter suggest to me.

After the *Hail, Mary*, I put myself into prayer in order to begin this Retreat.

The Lord had me abandon everything into His hands and attracted me totally to Him, so that I could not do anything other than love and rejoice, feeling that He possessed me totally and that He held me closely to Him.

This continued in me also after prayer and even to the time in which I fell asleep, with not being distracted by anything else. And I tried to follow that which the Lord was doing.

†

7. In preparing myself for Holy Communion, with that internal recollection of yesterday, the Lord reminded me that which He led me to know some time ago,

concerning my duty to live according to the spirit and to raise myself above all created realities. This is something that I have to go on doing and preparing for what comes after this Retreat.

I experienced some regret that they would only last for such a short time, but all the more did I desire not to lose a moment of time.

I made my meditation on the End of Man, taking the points from St. Ignatius, but even more considering with an interior insight nothing other, as I was fully occupied with the Lord.

In the midst of all this, I felt joy and consolation for not being constrained to any method, and for having the freedom of allowing myself to go toward all that the Lord willed to achieve, as also not being bound to times and being able to remain with Him, for as long as He willed. So it was, that I paused for more than two hours, passing all this time in recognition toward the Lord for having created me for so noble an end, that it made up all my delight. And in the sentiments of love that the Lord gave me toward Him, I protested that I would really like to serve Him, even if I were not to receive any reward from Him, but only because He merits this.

I regretted having done this so poorly. But wishing to engage myself somewhat in this, I could not do it, being totally occupied in joy and love.

I spent the time of the second meditation, which was concerning the End of the Religious Sister, in admiring the infinite mercy of God in my regard, in calling me not only to serve Him, in the religious life, but also in having chosen me for such a great undertaking, which is that which He placed in my hands.

I thought that the Lord, without looking at my enormous faults, planned to establish this Work offering so much to His glory, in place of choosing so many others, which better could have been able to serve Him, He called me to Himself and said:

*I want to establish a Work, an Institute, in which I wish to be served with perfection. For this undertaking I want you for the external endeavor. I will do all: you are to look **solely to Me**, in order to make any movement in harmony with My will.*

I paused in reflection on this choice, seeing the holiness to which this reflection ought to commit me, as really I ought to be wholly of the spirit, in order to unite me and to remain always united to God, from Whom I ought to take all my inspiration.

I regretted my poor correspondence employed up to now, and I proposed that to which I am to commit my every effort in order to lift from me all that impedes me from being such that the Lord repeats to me always that He would want me to be.

I assumed also a supreme trust in Him Who would give me, in harmony with my need, the necessary assistance, since it His affair, in which I am simply an agent, who ought to be ready to carry out only the orders of her Master.

In addition to these meditations, I offered in the day prayer in my usual manner, being drawn in those moments that I took a respite from the usual retreat.

In the particular examen, I found that I failed twice in raising up my eyes.

†

8. I tried, on getting up, to penetrate into those reflections adapted to the meditation of this day. I thought of exercising in this day interior mortification, by engaging myself in those expressions of affection and familiarity, that I usually employ with the Lord. At Holy Communion, there came to me these frequent

thoughts, but I sought to enter and to occupy myself more with sentiments of compunction rather than anything else.

In the first meditation that I made on the three-fold sin, I engaged in some confusion regarding myself, in thinking how many times I merited hell and the danger in which I am continuously still offending the Lord.

I reflected on the thought that this meditation ought to hold for me. I detested my pride and I repented of the thought of being able at every moment to lose with sin the grace of God and His love.

Penetrated somewhat with God's goodness, it seemed to me very little penalty for all the punishments, that as a consequence to sin had come into this world, as the pains of penalty, being so great that of the fault. And in fact, these were not suited to cancel this and therefore, Jesus Christ became man.

I engaged myself a little on this, comparing the time in which He had not come to this, and to this time in which we now find ourselves. And thinking of the rigor with which a single sin was punished, while we now have so many means for mercy. To this mercy, I recommended myself, finally, in engaging in the colloquy.

At the time set aside for the meditation, I felt myself being drawn to remain quiet with the Lord. I felt within myself such regret for not experiencing that compunction that I ought to have and I feared those sentiments of love for the Lord which I do feel. It seemed to me that this should make me feel these and bring me regret for my faults and sincere sorrow for them.

It seemed to me that I had done badly in not wanting to make use of those usual expressions with the Lord, and that others made me complain too much, while love is the means with which the Lord wishes to accomplish all in me and that this would be easier for me, in this way, to enter into those sentiments that I should have in these meditations.

And it is to remind me of all that was said to me, I thought of not following up on that which the morning prescribed for me, but to allow the Lord to work in me freely. This seemed to me to let my heart slip. I went on then to the second meditation that I made over the process of sins, with some aridity at the beginning. I experienced difficulty in exercising the intellect and simply reasoned it out.

I tried then to do it with an internal insight. It helped me somewhat, but I saw more in the over-all picture, and in just a part of it. I had no sentiment of compunction and sorrow. This served for my humiliation and with the will, it seemed to me that I hated and detested the sin.

That which I gained in the end was this reflection that served me also as a proposal: i.e., that whenever in some engagement I discover opposition to that which I would like and desire, I will say that it is just that what will be not contradicted, which so many times I did contradict that of the Lord.

That which engages me a bit more was by remembering all that the Lord did for my soul, from the moment that I had the use of reason. How many graces, how many benefits which would have sufficed from then to make a saint, one who would have better corresponded to that which I did.

But all this brought me to a sentiment of love for God, but did not serve me for compunction.

The third meditation I made on hell.

I tried to imagine to myself that place of torments, but feeling myself turn toward the Lord, it seemed to make to pick up the part of His justice, with finding that for however many punishments the damned endure, all is little in comparison to the offense brought against such goodness.

I found myself recollected and united to the Lord, feeling ever more that my paradise is to possess Him and my hell is to be separated from Him, as I count everything else as nothing.

I saw rather to have merited this so many times, but I could not hold myself long in this thought, but rather it seemed to me that I should not allow myself to let it all pass, not even for a moment, the fear of going there. And I experienced a great trust in the Lord, Who will use His mercy toward me, and it seemed to me that I was assured of this.

I humbled myself and let all else go then to form some acts of love toward Him.

†

The Illuminative Way

9. The first meditation was on the Reign of Christ.

In beginning this, it seemed to me that the Lord was drawing me to consider not just a call to His Realm, which is the usual and most ordinary, but to that which is higher, raising me up and drawing me toward Him. He made me comprehend that while He does call some to serve Him, He has called me to do so not as the lowest level of the servants of His Court - and not even like those who stand close to the King, and who are His most favored. But He has called me as His Spouse, who ought to seek to imitate in everything her Husband, seeking in everything to be similar to Him and to please Him.

There was represented to me, then, therefore, that purity that I ought to have, as really I should live totally of the spirit, not paying any attention at all to the realities down here, as I ought to have always my sights fixed on God, striving in every way to please Him, and to give Him glory, and so on. But, all this I saw in an intimate and spiritual manner, that words can only very badly render.

I also knew in the same manner, when not operating in this totally spiritual manner, my fear ought to be poured out only in giving disgust to God. My call is to proceed totally from love, excluding from myself that which I have at times, which for my failures the Lord rejected me and would not want me as the instrument for His glory.

It seemed to me that I comprehended, or to put it better, to see, to feel, to taste, the love which the Lord has for my soul, a love which demands from me a supreme caution and exquisite diligence not to give Him the least disgust.

It seemed to me that I saw the Lord within me that He was committing me to this, and said to me that for those failings that I commit, He will not reject me, but that they do displease Him to the utmost, and that this ought to suffice for me to flee them.

Then I spent this entire meditation in knowing, loving to unite myself to the Lord, Who was communicated to me in so admirable a manner.

I made acts of love, of sorrow and I prayed Him to render me such, as He made me more particularly to know what He willed that I should do.

Toward the end, I prayed also for that undertaking in which He has placed my hands, desiring to be able soon to serve Him in this and to make Him served with that perfection that He has made me know, and so on.

†

The second meditation I made on the Incarnation.

This I spent with total recollection, with few reflections. I produced some acts of gratitude toward the Lord and of a desire for humility, seeing the abasement of a God and my pride confused me.

The examen of the same I spent in recollection, feeling myself drawn to remain united with Him.

I experienced a bit of confusion in seeing that I had not been able to busy myself but very little with the object of the past meditation.

There arose within me some doubts that what I felt toward the Lord was truly genuine. It seemed to me that I ought, if I could, to know how to occupy myself in the meditation on the mysteries of the Lord.

But they lasted only a little while for me, saying to this good God that He knows that I am disposed for anything which either He might suggest to me, or to make me understand by means of His minister, and that I do not desire anything other than to please Him and for this to renounce also every interior consolation.

†

The third meditation I made on the private life of Jesus Christ¹⁵.

I experienced in the beginning a tiredness, but then looking at the life of Jesus Christ from His 12th to His 30th year, I experienced a great desire that the virtues practiced by Him would be those that are to be exercised in our Institute and that our life would be a genuine imitation of that of Jesus Christ.

I thought then to go on attentively observing them, and that they might be the object of the conferences which might be given among us, and that these should in a particular manner ought to be inculcated to the Novices I consoled myself thinking that the Lord would want so great a perfection in this Institute. I had the desire that He might speed up the moment to be able to walk on these in that manner. I exposed to Him the ties and the bonds in which we now find ourselves, which become for me ever more heavy, in the measure that He goes on making me understand the Plan of this Institute, which it seems to me that it is being called to give Him such glory and to serve for the sanctification of so many souls. The examen of this evening I spent united to the Lord, without being able to do anything else.

†

The fourth meditation on the two standards.

I spent this recollection, with gratitude toward the Lord for having called me not only under His standard, but also to follow His counsels very closely, I desired to be able to draw here a great array of souls, who would serve Him with perfection, and I prayed to Him to hasten that moment.

†

10. This morning at Holy Communion, the Lord opened my heart more widely in order to follow Him along the path of love.

¹⁵ NB: [translator's note]: this offers a deep insight into the spirituality of the Sisters of the Holy Family.

Experiencing some regret for a few words that I had spoken, finding fault with my weakness, the Lord led me to understand that I ought not for any failing to allow myself to fall into fear. But only love ought to make me want this.

In a moment in which I experienced myself to be united to Him, I still regretted for not doing anything in exchange for His love that he has for me.

I saw my own wretchedness and I exposed to Him that it is fitting that He might give me Himself in order to be able to render this to Him. This was one manner and with a most gentle internal word dictated by love.

The first meditation I made on the three classes of men.

I spent this in quiet and repose, but without being able to operate my faculties in any manner. I did experience a bit of boredom and some distractions, but the time passed quickly for me.

In the examen of this meditation, I thought that everything is limited in me to desires and in accepting the love that the Lord shows me and makes me grasp internally. But, that I do not do anything for Him. And it seems to me that I do not love Him, because if indeed I loved Him really, my works ought to give some proof of this. I humbled myself, but without beating on myself and I recommended myself to the Lord. Because He bestowed grace upon me to come finally to the task, since without this it seems to me that all is nothing.

†

The second meditation on the public life of the Lord.

This I spent almost totally distracted, not being able to reflected but very little on the object of the mediation. I did make some acts of humiliation for the distractions that came to me.

Lastly, there did come to me some thoughts regarding the Institute.

I seemed to me that his would be in everything in conformity o the life of Jesus Christ, also in His public life and in His preparation for this, taking the practice of he virtues and the retreat and prayers. In brief, all of it.

I experienced sentiments of gratitude toward the Lord, who for this state had called me, and I begged Him for the grace to profit by so much benefit, and that I give myself to its perfection with all my spirit . In the examen of this I found myself internally recollected and I followed this recollection.

†

The third meditation I made on the unfolding of he public life of Jesus Christ.

I spent the entire time, almost distracted and with boredom and not being able to fix my attention on anything. I humbled myself about this, and I said often: **without Your help, nothing is in man** ¹⁶ really feeling that when the Lord does not give me Himself, I am not good to help myself in anything.

Some of my defects came to my mind that I commit at times and which displease the Lord. On these, I had a clearer view than usual and particularly of one to which I gave little attention and that I thought furthermore that I prejudiced me.

I thought that with that very boredom that I experienced, He wanted me to know it. I thanked the Lord for this light and proposed to be more careful and to wish to remove it altogether.

†

¹⁶ From the Liturgical Sequence for Pentecost: *nisi tuo numine nihil est in homine...*

11. The first meditation: the Supper of the Lord.
 United to the Lord, with the quiet of my faculties. Distractions at the end.
 The second meditation was like the one just passed.
 Third: united closely to the Lord, with joy and love, totally absorbed in this one.

†

12. First meditation: in the beginning union. In the end, thoughts concerning the Institute.

The second: great desires to do the divine will and to be pleasing to the Lord. The sacrifice, therefore, of every consolation, and so on.

The third: in the beginning union. Lastly, thoughts about the Institute. It seems that the Lord was saying: *Have patience, wait a while, you will see, you will see.*

Union of will to this.

†

13. The first meditation: union, lights concerning myself.

Conserve more internally that which the Lord does, not to oblige me to make everything public, depend on the internal motions in order to do this. Be forgetful of myself and occupy myself only with the interests of His glory. In Holy Communion, sorrow for my failings and compunction.

Desires to love God.

The second meditation: distracted.

†

September

25. Knowledge of myself, and of my own misery with a sentiment of sorrow in the depths of my spirit as this is an impediment for my procuring the greater Glory of God.

Lights for the advantage for all this knowledge Trust in what the Lord might work in my nothingness. Then I felt that confidence that He would do it. Sentiments of courage. Stimuli and desires to remove on my part every impediment and to draw myself ever more to the Lord.

†

26. Recollection at Communion. A sentiment of being isolated with God Alone, not only in my heart, but also in my mind. In prayer, stimuli and excitement to a life hidden in God, with Jesus. Joy in this. Distractions at the end, caused by memory.

†

October

Internal excitement to love the Lord. Light concerning how much He does for us. Sentiment of gratitude and of thanking the Lord before seeing the effects of how much is promised.

†

25. Sentiment of total abandonment in God. Trust in Him. Internal communications of my soul with God. A sentiment of being loved by Him. Desire to correspond, to burn with love.

†

November

20. Immersed in charity. A sentiment that, remaining in this, conserved more easily the tidiness of soul. A desire for this. It seemed to me that I heard these words: *Do not slow down in forming continuous acts of love.*

Having come to know that I should never depart from the quiet and tranquility of spirit, not even for the defects of my companions, as I have an excessive natural concern to correct them.

†

December

27. Light concerning the manner of prayer. Defects committed in this which are: to make my faculties active, to form acts, supporting myself on these. And these things bring me aridity and distractions.

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1815

March

23. In prayer, thinking of the devotion that the Lord has given to the glorious St. Joseph to the graces which by means of this Saint have been granted me, made me remember these words: *We have founded the Society of Jesus.*¹⁷ And it seemed to me that the Lord has given me this devotion to the Holy Family, was as a pledge that He wished that also by this means that the Society would be founded, which has placed in my heart the movement to be zealous for this¹⁸.

†

Most Blessed Father¹⁹

I take the liberty, with this my most humble letter, to present myself at the feet of Your Holiness, to expose to you the desires of my poor heart, which are all intent on corresponding to the divine call and to carry out the divine Will, with a perfect obedience to Your Holiness. Since I have remained without the help of any human support, at the death of the Arch-duchess, I placed greater trust in God, Who in His Works is pleased to chose the most weak and vile instruments in order to have His glory stand out.

And know that what could secure me from presumption in this confidence of mine, would be the Apostolic Blessing of His Vicar on earth, and so, I hasten to ask for it, humbling myself at the feet of Your Holiness where I place our little union. And what proved to me to be a two-fold consolation was that of having obtained it from Your Holiness, in that time in which you were found in glorious slavery in Savona.

Encouraged and animated by this, with my companions we have continued to practice that which we had already begun concerning the interior spirit and education of the youth, and I did not lose time in drawing up a Plan. According to that end and manner, with which I seemed to me that God wanted to be served by us, with the hope of executing this in happier times, for our Holy Religion.

Now, once more, I humbly place at your feet our little union, begging Your Holiness once more to bless it, so that my such a means, all will have been done by us, with ever greater assuredness, according to the will of the Lord, and for His pure glory, supplicating in the same act Your Holiness to grant me the faculty of acquiring a certain locale of ecclesiastical purpose, from the past Government already alienated, or to receive it, as this is being gratuitously granted me, as it has already been offered.

In this, we will go on experimenting better what has been established for us to observe, and thereby having tried our forces and the goods themselves, to have the boldness to humbly place all for the examination and approval of Your Holiness, whose most holy feet, I kiss with most profound veneration.

¹⁷ *Nos fundavimus Societatem Iesus* - cf. Petazzi, 'The Mystery of the Company', p. 122.

¹⁸ NB: [Translator's note] - these words offer great insight into the spirituality of the Sisters of the Holy Family.

¹⁹ This is a copy of the petition sent to Pope Pius VII in order to obtain the faculty of acquiring some Church property for her Institute.

**Most Blessed Father
of Your Holiness, I am,
Your most Humble and Obedient Servant.
Leopoldina Naudet
Verona - April 1, 1815.**

†

April

For 15 days, and more, of this month, I experienced aridity and distractions which bring me suffering.

21. I had a moment of light in which it seemed to me that the Lord willed that I purify in myself every little obstacle, that might be in opposition to relying on **Him alone**. I came to understand that a word that I said the day before, counting on the help coming from a person for the Work, was not according to this and that **He** wants to do it **alone**.

†

22. Continuation of the thought of yesterday.

That I ought to look always fixed on the Lord and that He does not want even that, with just a flicker of the eye, while one is standing in Him, that I would look to anyone else. He will present me the means, to serve myself with indifference and looking at them in Him, without making any account of it.

Exercises

20. I began this evening with a little retreat in the form of the Exercises.

21. First Meditation. The End of Man.

I had a sentiment concerning having been created, in so far as the body, of this earth, in so far as the soul is concerned, the spirit in the image of God. Therefore, since the soul is spiritual, I ought to live of the spirit, I ought to aspire to God with that communication that our spirit might have with God, Who is pure spirit.

Created to love, praise, serve God.

Affection of confidence in God that, being created to do this and he gave me the desire of loving Him and serving Him, He will give me His holy love and the grace of serving Him. No doubt can remain therefore with regard to God, that added also to me the grace of calling me to follow Him more closely.

I reflected on the many offenses committed by me, that gave me reason to think that the Lord justly slowed down for me the moment of serving Him according to the yearning that He gives me.

I supplicated Him to give me the grace of discounting in another manner my ingratitude, but not to deprive me further of the good of serving Him with greater fervor and to make Him serve with perfection from others, with giving a principle to all that He will give me the grace of desiring it.

In all this meditation I experienced quiet, peace and recollection, except for a little distraction.

†

Second Meditation. Three-fold Sin

A brief light concerning the greatness of God, the enormity of sin, for which it seemed to me every torment seems very slight, even for one alone. And the greater the fault than any eternal penalty. Distractions and aridity. In the end, then, in the

colloquy with the Crucified Jesus, I protested to have wanted to do much for Him and to suffer every fatigue in order to bring to a head the establishment of a religious Community by means of which many souls would come to be saved and many to practice a genuine and solid perfection.

Third Meditation. Hell. This went poorly with distractions and boredom.

†

22. *First Meditation. The Reign of Christ.*

Distraction, some affections of love towards the Lord.

Second Meditation His Private Life

I could not meditate. Tiredness, aridity, displeasure about this, for the yearning that I have for the grace of devotion.

It seemed to me that this was in some way defective. Resignation concerning the privation of every consolation and not to will, even in all this, anything other Than the will of God.

Third Meditation. The Doctrine of Christ.

Fervor, affections, enjoyment.

The end, then, as the other one.

†

23. *First Meditation. The Supper*

Few reflections, some distractions, a state of quiet.

Second Meditation. Prayer in the Garden

As the past meditation.

Third Meditation. The Passion.

The same.

†

24. *Love of God*

Some defects. Many desires.

Consolation in recollection to find myself, from the moment that I leave behind treating with creatures, totally united to God.

This changed in me some thoughts, that I regarded as temptations, as they seemed to me to be contrary to the state in which God wants me, since these were a calling to memory of that which I believed once so that I had been called to a life that was purely contemplative to be so little active in the fulfillment of this.

Meditation on the End.

In the beginning the thought of not knowing how to use my intellect.

Some distractions for the means used.

A greater facility for everything with recollection.

I was distracted by the thought of possessing God, fearing this to be contrary to the sentiments of compunction.

Second Meditation on the End.

In the beginning, it was with some difficulty to make the reason function, and there were distractions.

In the midst of this, there was some consolation by way of affection.

In the end, I was distracted with aridity, annoyance, tiredness, but I had the will to persevere and was content to suffer.

The cause for all this could have been not having willed to stop myself in the usual manner of prayer to which I felt myself drawn.

I failed in this day in two matters of *the additions*, concerning my eyes and about the manner of the examen after the meditation.

I also failed in the meditations, in which I had worked with pusillanimity, in engaging myself from that in which I could, and so, not succeeding in the rest.

Concerning the manner of meditation, it remained more on the level of desire than of succeeding in performing as I ought, as apprehension and preoccupation of not being able to succeed in that manner.

Meditation of the night: some sentiments and knowledge, but only little. Notwithstanding this, it passed quickly.

Humiliation concerning delicacy.

†

Meditation. The Process for Sins.

There were difficulties in having the intellect work, distractions in doing this.

Regarding the 4th point: **What is God?**²⁰

There was the inclination to be quiet in God, but restrictions of time. Desires for compunction, regret in not experiencing any. Humiliation.

After having read St. Augustine: Nothing. I thought of being able to make the *Repetition* by means of recollection and the customary manner of prayer. I do not feel the same regret for past sins, rather I found myself to be most quiet concerning them.

†

Third Meditation. Repetition.

In the beginning, with actual devotion.

The same difficulty concerning the discourse of the intellect.

I sought to recall those things, which at times bring me fears, but uselessly.

There were quiet, repose, being engaged a bit within, without either lights, or anything else. That a prayer within for the Lord to grant me sentiments of compunction. There were colloquies with the desire of obtaining that which they contained.

†

Fourth Meditation. Repetition.

Greater facility by way of charity of rediscovering my sins.

The Process for these.

Fifth Meditation. Hell.

Distracted, not being able to make use of my mind.

Two thoughts only occupied me: God is all that Paradise is, and the deprivation from God is hell. **God alone** is the good to be desired, the deprivation from God is the sole evil to be feared.

I thought that my greater need is humility, and so from the manner in which I made this meditation, I have only a sole motive to humble myself.

Disposition: being content with that which God wills. I am quiet and content to continue the same manner and path.

†

²⁰ For Mother Leopoldina's Latin: *Quid sit Deus?*

The Tenth Addition.

Speaking of interior penance, I thus deprived myself also of certain expressions toward the Lord, which brought me joy, when I found them to pronounce them, but I distanced myself from them.

Having failed with my being occupied in the thought of the meditations to come, but only in passing. That which happened to me in the meditation on sin, the night.

†

Days in the midst: meditation on the Prodigal Son.

This did not go badly. There was physical tiredness.

After lunch, there was prayer with supreme joy, contentment and a feast with the Lord.

†

26. Prayer and, after Holy Communion, sentiments of the dangers which I could incur.

Gratitude, love.

Total despoilment. There was not the least mixture of myself in all these matters. Nor other ends.

Life is wholly of God in the most strict sense.

†

*Examen.**Morning of the first day, 21.*

I looked around twice in Church during Mass.

Annoyance when a companion came to speak with me. And since she returned, noticing my annoyance, to dismiss this, I held back speaking.

†

Second Day

I looked around in Church twice.

Useless thoughts on unimportant matters and business.

Fear that someone might come and that it might have seemed surprising that I did not go.

†

Third Day

I looked around twice in Church.

A movement of impatience for something badly done, and haste in judging it.

†

Examen on Cleanliness of Heart.

Bad habits that bring me to commit superficialities are:

1. Love for my own comforts and delicacy of health, which bring me often to say some words in complaint, when things are not going well for me.
2. Love for quiet and certain occupations, that cause me boredom and complaint whenever I am disturbed.

From these two attitudes comes also impatience.

3. A certain facility of finding fault with the activities of my neighbor, which leads at times that I might say also some words against charity.

†

Regarding Dullness

It seems to me that for some time I have been assailed by feeling laziness for spiritual matters and desiring some times the end of prayer.

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1820

Remember, my soul, how great is your misery and that, when the Lord has put you to the proof, you have been weak, without strength, agitated by a thousand thoughts and anguish. You were tired in suffering and you found yourself in a stormy sea. Your spirit has been anguished and in the midst of the waves of temptations, it seemed that you were submerged.

The faculties occupied in that is what saddened you. Memory crucified you with the recollection of the past.

The intellect represented to you all that could bring weight to the tribulation. Your will brought you to desire the end of all this, and tired you from suffering and its length.

This, then, is what you are, and even worse than has been noted here.

So, when once more the Lord gives you the grace of peace and quiet of spirit, remember that it is His gift and that, as far as you are concerned, you are the most wretched and vile creature, that there is in this world.

†

J.M.J.I.

After fifteen months of continuous disturbance on ending the Novena of the most glorious St. Ignatius, it seemed to me that I felt that I had to make an Act of Abandonment in God and of trust in God's loving and paternal protection, from Whom I experienced so many times the effects and also in an admirable and unexpected manner.

This confidence made me in so many encounters quiet and tranquil in the midst of so many tribulations that I passed through.

This confidence, in brief, I considered as the greatest gift that the Lord had bestowed on me.

This confidence is therefore that to which I must attach myself and seek and abandon myself with full trust in God, in His omnipotence, wisdom and goodness.

This abandonment and this complete trust in God ought to me to be all the more easy to exercise, as I have experienced its effects, and so from the depths of my heart and without any hesitation I make the following act.

I intend to make it freely, with a vow, without any obligation of sin, but moved by love toward my God, from the confusion of having been distanced from this total abandonment in my Lord, by Whom I ought to place all my anguish.

†

Act of Abandonment²¹

Being confused, o my Lord, from being distanced from abandonment in You which You want of me, and I ask you pardon a thousand times for this. And from this moment, and for ever, I abandon all my interests into Your hands, trusting entirely in Your infinite goodness, sure that You have more

²¹ This is the Act of Abandonment in which Leopoldina entrusts to the Lord herself and her own Institute. It was composed by her almost certainly after she had been deprived of Fr. Bertoni's spiritual direction.

Now it is prayed every day by her spiritual daughters and by anyone who would like to share in some way in her charism.

concern and thought of me and of the things entrusted to me by You than all that I might have of myself. Therefore, from now on I wish to live without anguish and fears, to do all that I might for You, in order to serve You and to bring You to be loved and served by others as much as this will be possible for me to do so.

I wish to give my thought to procuring Your Glory and Your holy service: and You think for me.

I need a Guide both for me and for this Work. Think of this, my Love. And to You I abandon everything. You can, You know and You will, and that is enough for me to be certain that You will do this.

Give me Your holy love, zeal for Your glory and increase ever in me trust and confidence in You.

I ask you all this through the merits of Mary Most Holy, of her who is Your Mother, to whom You can refuse nothing that she asks, through those of St. Joseph, Your adoptive Father and of my Advocate, St. Ignatius.

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1827

The Exercises

On October 28th, in the evening, I entered into the Holy exercises.

The Lord granted me the charity to bestow on me all that day a great peace in my activities and a great leveling various matters that I had to dispose of in order to place myself in some peace for the following days.

This peace made me think what my defects are, whenever I hasten, and boredom for the multiplicity of matters that need my attention. This is what dissipates me. It comes as a weight on me, whether it is just a little or much, and when I have to let some go because of the fatigue. This would be much diminished if, taking charge of myself, I would operate with that peace that the Lord has me enjoy interior matters.

This, then, is one of those separations that I see always in me. The Lord works a certain peace in me through His mercy while I create dissipation and frantic solicitude on the outside. This evening I had for a moment a desire to occupy myself with eternal truths in these days and that with some aspects of assistance. However, I got rid of the thought, turning myself entirely toward the second part of the Exercises.

I seemed to me that my whole soul was entering into the joy of the Lord and that He opened up my heart, in thinking that my entire occupation is to be that of meditating on the life of Jesus Christ.

Such was the fullness of joy, that it seemed to me that I could not in these days satiate my yearning of this.

†

29. *First Meditation. The Reign of Christ*

Recollection, joy.

The ends are that of following Jesus Christ, to offer glory to His Most Holy Name, my own sanctification and the salvation of souls.

A certain apprehension of nature regarding my suffering, for the memory of having made it so badly, when the Lord had given me some tribulation.

I proposed to stand to Jesus and so united to Him, and to the following of Him, that it did not have to be any longer this way.

Whatever, only since last evening that I entered into these Exercises, I had the occasion of experiencing that the many defects of impatience, that I commit, flow from an external dissipation, which impedes me from making that little reflection and of looking within me, where my Lord dwells, and from Whom I can so easily take the norm of my actions.

The occasion in which I show at times this impatience appears when something is not done which I need, or which is done poorly, or when I fear that it might damage my health. Now, many times since last night I was in one of these situations. And because of the retreat, keeping the silence, I proved that I do not suffer from these things any internal alteration. And it did me no harm by now manifesting this externally.

†

Second Meditation. The Following of Jesus Christ

Easy. The reward in this world and not in the other. The need of this following for perfection.

I experienced gratitude for having made me understand by experience and by having filled my soul with consolation in His service.

Regret and suffering for those sins committed in this, that form a kind of continual counter-weight within me for that peace and consolation of which the Lord out of His infinite mercy, fills me. There was the recognition of how just is this suffering, which follows anyone who has sinned.

There was prayer because there is so much to be purified, to be discounted.

†

Third Meditation. The Humility of Jesus in His Incarnation. Nativity.

I experienced distraction. It seemed to me that this came from reading about it, which distracted me, while I recollected myself the more with only looking again with in me at that upon which I meditated.

In the examen, it appeared to me that it could also come, my not being able to apply myself and to internalize in that meditation from my never reflecting on the Lord's own humility.

I thought, therefore, that I was totally lacking in this humility, in so far as practicing I in union with that of Jesus and in the manners that He practiced it.

I see a total separation between that which the Lord out of His mercy achieves in me and that which I do myself, which is evil. From his insight I will leave depart again.

But, that which is even more through is a clear truth which I know by faith, which humility is. I am persuaded that from one moment to another I am rather dense, if the Lord does not help me. But even this is through a faith, which I can no longer even call such, because I really see it. And I have also experienced it many times.

I fear being pleased in something that is good which I might be able to do, being sure that that would not be mine, but that the Lord in an instant can raise me up through His holy grace, His help - and therefore, I can really do nothing.

All of this I touch with my hand and therefore it seemed to me to be a knowledge of experience, which is in accord with the faith.

I love to speak of my wretchedness and worthlessness. It seems to me that I would be pleased that all would see in me that which I see, but so that the truth would be recognized and glory would be rendered to God.

I suffer, when I hear that keeping the work in mind that the Lord has deigned to entrust to me, and they give me some praise. I would wish that, as for me, all would see that the Lord is doing all of it Himself. And it seems to me that I would be very happy, if all would understand that I am not suited for anything, and am like a rusty old machine, that does not work any more. When the Lord moves it, and even if it functions quite poorly, simply because it does not resist and is not good for anything: and it is the mercy of this good God, that He does not cast it out into the fire.

It is not the case, though, as happens in the humble, that I love being disdained. No, perhaps this would not please me. But, it is because I enjoy that God

is glorified and because it seems to me that he is more greatly so, if those who knew me were to know these things.

In fact, in this, as in all else, I see that I do not have any virtue, not even what St. Thomas calls that of the first level and that of the lowest, in which the common actions are produced.

†

October 30.

First Meditation. The Obedience of Jesus Christ.

I experienced, in the act of preparation, a certain joy in annihilating myself before God in being nothing myself, a worm: He is all.

I stayed a while on this.

In the meditation, boredom and only some regret for the little submission I have to God, when He does send me some affliction.

†

Second Meditation. Humility

To repair that which I lacked in the other meditation, I thought of taking up again the subject and in the difficulty I experienced in reflecting on it, I proposed to offer from now on sometimes, even often, my meditation on the life of Jesus Christ. And I humbled myself seeing that with the experience of myself and of my misery, I made the meditation on humility.

And I saw that it is all the mercy of the Lord, when I have such little fervor.

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1831

Reform

Genuflection to the ground, profound, before the Most Blessed Sacrament, if possible.

Eyes lowered, and supreme reverence in prayer.

To look over, in so far as possible, the matters of the night before, and as soon as I am dressed, to go to adore the Most Blessed Sacrament and to offer prayer.

To look over also my affairs with quiet and with diligence to go along disposing of them. In organizing them, as well as carrying them out, to give an eye to the Lord within me, taking thus from Him the movements and the carrying out of charity.

Not to give the slightest indication of being disturbed, if something is lacking to me, or if something which would have served me, will be done poorly. If any of this could hinder my activity, then to say this with quiet, and reminding myself often that it is a charity that is being done to me, to assist me in that of which I have need.

To make often my meditation on the life of Jesus Christ and to study there His Spirit in order to imitate His virtues.

Having established Jesus as the Superior of this Institute, to consider Him this in a particular way, and as such to obey Him with exactness and to receive all that has to be done, all that takes place throughout the day as His orders, with reverence and to fulfill them with diligence.

To avoid speaking of my neighbor, doing so only when it is good, when I will see that I can do this. To excuse, whenever I will feel like saying something evil, and to mortify my judgment, which easily incurs judging the actions of my neighbor.

If I will be in the necessity of having to say something, or mention a defect about some other person, to keep vigilance over myself to be attentive not to surpass proper limits. This is so that there will be charity, both in speaking, as well as in keeping silent.

With my companions, to use charity in all manners that it be present in listening, without showing annoyance, nor to make it known that I would rather be doing something else, denying myself and not following my own insights, which might carry me to do something else.

To anticipate my companions, whenever I can foresee that they might have some need of me. And to procure that I no longer be lacking in helping them, making them render an account in the time that it should be done. And to deliver the conferences.

†

First Friday of the Month of October.

I will try possibly to prepare the evening before that which has to be done the morning after, in order not to think the very first moment of the new day of anything other than prayer. And therefore, I will do this at the last quarter of recreation of the evening before, there might come to me that which that is written.

I will possibly make a half hour of spiritual reading every day.

I will read the papers in the free time following dinner and supper. And should I have some other bit of time, the spiritual reading before everything else. I am reading the works of St. Jeanne de Chantal.

I will occupy myself with the thought of mortification and I will be careful if there is any one of the many comforts that I have, of which I could do without, out of love for my Jesus, striving also to go to refectory also with the others.

The defect that I will strive to combat in this month will be that of not speaking badly of my neighbor, striving to excuse their defects with genuine charity.

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